

CPC Recommends Brooks Foundation And Jenkins Bogs Purchase 03 February 2021

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Harwich news.

HARWICH — The community preservation committee voted last week to recommend that voters support two major funding projects for historic preservation and open space at the annual town meeting in May. The committee is endorsing funding for the Brooks Academy foundation and basement addition project and funds to assist the Harwich Conservation Trust with the purchase of the 31-acre Jenkins bogs property. The CPC spent two hours last Thursday evening deliberating on 15 applications seeking Community Preservation Act funds. The big ticket item was the Brooks Academy reconstruction of the historic building's brick foundation and its expansion to a full basement beneath the former Pine Grove Seminary, built in 1844.

John Wathne, P.E. of Construction North Consulting Engineers, who was retained by the Brooks Academy commission, told CPC members recently that the structure was unstable and the foundation needs major repairs.

The initial funding request for the project was \$785,000, but commission Chair David Spitz said there is lot of interest in putting in a full basement while the building is raised for the foundation work. He said the Harwich Historical Society, which operates the Brooks Academy Museum, has been pushing for a basement to provide additional storage.

With the addition of a full basement, the CPC is recommending \$1,150,000 be approved for the project, voting 6-1 to support the funding. Member Katherine Green cast the dissenting vote, saying she supports the foundation work but the addition of the basement would also lead to finishing, furnishing and climate control system costs. Green said there is plenty of storage space in the basement of the community center, if needed.

The committee also approved \$360,000 for the Hinckley's Pond Watershed Preservation Project, a partnership between the town and Harwich Conservation Trust for the purchase of 31-acres of cranberry bogs and surrounding upland along Route 124 and Headwaters Drive.

The property is owned by the Jenkins Nominee Trust. The Jenkins family has work the cranberry bogs for years, but overproduction of cranberries in recent years has turned the economics sour. The Jenkins family has decided to sell the property and reached out to HCT in the hopes of seeing the land preserved as open space and used for hiking trails. The property borders the east side of Hinckley's Pond, and preservation of the open space is seen as helping maintain the health of the pond and the Herring River, which flows into the pond.

The property purchase price is \$732,500. The agreement being worked out between the town and HCT calls for the town to contribute \$360,000 to the trust to assist with the purchase. The town would receive a conservation restriction on the property, which would be purchased by the trust. The trust will pursue a fund-raising drive with a goal of \$440,000 to cover the purchase price and additional funding for legal expenses and a management plan.

"It would be a real mistake not to fund and preserve it," CPC member John Ketchum said. The town must take every opportunity to protect the aquifer and reduce nitrogen loading, he said. The committee voted 5-1-1 to recommend the funding, with Mary Maslowski casting the dissenting vote and Donna Kalinick abstaining without a recommendation from selectmen.

The committee pulled a request for the recreation department for an additional \$100,000 for the lighting project at Whitehouse Field. Town Meeting in September approved \$380,360 for the project, but design specification drove the price up by \$100,000. After additional assessments were conducted by the town engineering department, it was determined the additional funds were not necessary.

The second phase of the Sand Pond Revitalization Project squeaked by the committee. The recreation department was seeking \$83,500 for improvements to the parking lot and the addition of a playground. Member Elizabeth Harder said she had lunch there the other day and absolutely loved it the way it is now. But member Rob Doane said the property is valuable and should be enhanced. Green opposed the addition of swings and other recreational equipment. CPC Chair David Nixon called the pond a gem, adding it

serves a section of the community who has to travel a distance to go to other playgrounds. The committee voted 4-3 to recommend the funding.

There were also mixed feelings among committee members over a \$112,200 gravestone preservation project for the East Harwich Methodist Church Cemetery. There were issues raised about ownership of the cemetery, and while the consensus was that it belongs to the church, there were questions about liability if the town issues a contract to do work there and someone gets hurt. But the sense was gravestones there are in rough shape and should be repaired. The committee voted 4-3 to recommend the funding.

There was not enough money allocated for historic preservation to fund a \$135,025 request from the cemetery commission for restoration of fence posts and rails for the cemetery.

The CPC voted to recommend \$150,000 for a natural heritage trail project for the Harwich Conservation Trust; \$125,000 for a Brooks Park lighting project; \$50,000 for a part-time housing coordinator; \$48,383 for a flag pole project at the Veterans Memorial Circle at Evergreen Cemetery; \$40,181 for a fencing project at Senior Memorial Field; \$15,000 for a veterans home in Dennis; \$15,000 for bikeway crossing lights at Depot Road South; \$7,500 for the Lower Cape Community Housing Institute; and \$1,000 for a border marker project between Harwich and Chatham along the Old Colony Rail Trail.